

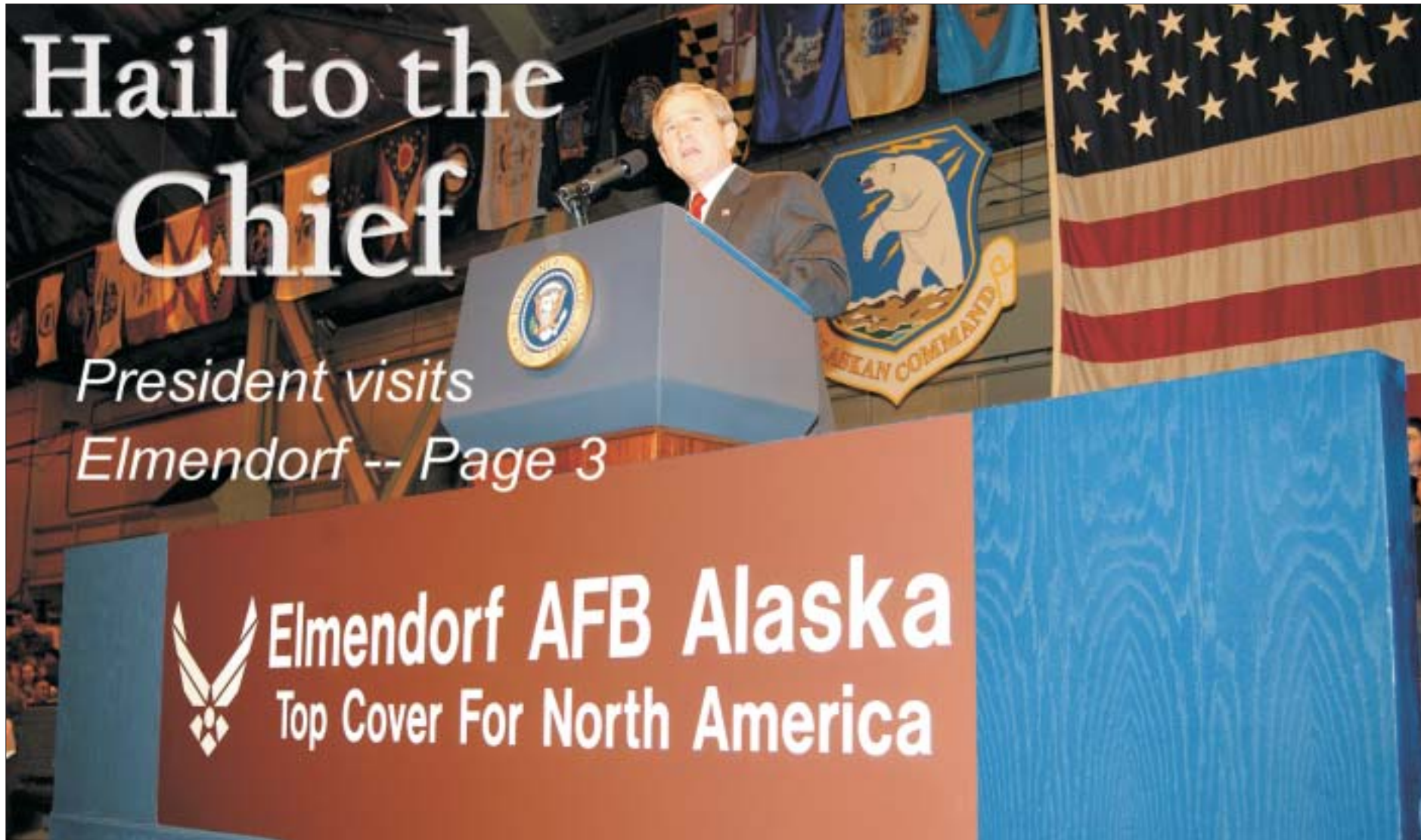
The Sourdough

S E N T I N E L

Feb. 22, 2002

www.elmendorf.af.mil/Sentinel.htm

Vol. 53, No. 8



Susitna kids help sustain deployed troops -- Page 7



Open Ranks

By Staff Sgt. Nate Hier
3rd Wing Public Affairs

Let me be honest. I'm no award-winning commentary writer like many others in this office -- namely George Woodward, best in the Air Force for 2000, or his protege, Staff Sgt. Jim Fisher, this year's PACAF winner, among about 30 other awards. However, I do have something worthy of the column, just minus the flare you've grown accustomed to. I'm just shooting for as few spelling and grammatical errors as possible.

I just finished with the greatest TDY in the history of TDYs -- Bootstrap. From September to this past weekend, I was a full-time college student finishing my bachelor's degree. Though it's a great program, one anyone interested in finishing school should look into, this story is just about getting back to school ... period.

For me, it took about 10 years. When supervisors pushed me to get back to college, my response was always, "I joined the Air Force so I could get away from it!" How times have changed. Each of those old supervisors has been kind enough to let me know how much.

It seems tough at first. I remember walking into my first class last spring thinking I wanted to be anywhere but in that room for the next three hours-plus after a full duty day. My family was at home, supper was at home, anything and everything good was some place else.

That night I had a long talk with my better half, who immediately instructed me to quit whining and suck it up. Though I think she could have been slightly more tender, the message got through, and having been given my marching orders, I marched.

The funny thing is, though it seemed like three hours of pure torment every time I went, it got less and less painful. Eventually, I got into a routine. You know when you have to devote time to school and when you can just "hang out" with your family or friends. I'm not going to lie and say it becomes pure, unadulterated fun -- or anything remotely close to it -- but it definitely becomes bearable, part of your job.

I would've finished eventually, with or without Bootstrap, but I'm grateful to my unit and to the Air Force for the opportunity. Even if it's only one class at a time, chip away. Before you know it, they'll be handing you a degree.

Arctic Life

Great living in the great land

Susitna kids help sustain deployed airmen

90th FS receives goodies, good cheer during deployment to Korean Peninsula

SSgt. Sandra Harden
3rd Wing Public Affairs

When 11 large boxes arrived at the deployment location of the 90th Fighter Squadron, no one was expecting them. The return address was the Sustina Elementary School in Anchorage.

While deployed to Kwang Ju, South Korea, Elmendorf's 90th FS members had been prepared for a vigorous mission and for winter hardships in a foreign country, but they weren't quite prepared for the outpouring of love and thoughtfulness of Anchorage's school kids.

Hundreds of small hands had put together Christmas and care packages and mailed them across to the Pacific, to the sharp edge of the sword.

Boxes brimming with candies, cookies and cards; jam-packed with stockings and stuffers; little gifts, love-filled letters -- members of the 90th FS were awestruck: Who were these children behind this outpouring of compassion?

Lt. Col. Bradley Dodd, 90th FS commander, said everyone at the

squadron, including himself, was deeply moved by the graciousness of the children who had shared so much of themselves. The school didn't have any special relationship with the squadron, and had not previously visited the base.

"The squadron's appreciation for these kinds of acts can't be described," Dodd said. "The expression of their thoughts in the cards and letters gave us a knowing feeling of the support we had back home."

Back home, with just a germ of an idea, Gwen Schnabel, special education teacher, found 500 willing hearts at Sustina Elementary to help it blossom into reality.

"During a student services committee meeting, the care package was suggested as a way to get involved in the community," Schnabel related. The committee set about getting information about the unit deploying from Elmendorf. The 90th FS deployed to Kwang Ju in October, just one month after the 9-11 devastation. At Kwang Ju, 90th FS aircraft and airmen provided additional security for South Korea.

"It meant a lot to the squadron to know people had taken the time to do this," Dodd said. "We wanted them to know how much it meant to us."

"We wanted to tell them how thankful we were," said Capt. Ahren Heidt.

Heidt, along with Dodd and seven of those who had deployed, visited the school Jan. 23 to present gifts to the various classes that participated.

They presented each teacher a thank you letter and a large framed photo of all the deployed members in front of an F-15E. Each child received a 90th FS patch embroidered with Kwang Ju.

It was at Kwang Ju that memories of home lingered as the temperatures cooled and the holidays loomed large and lonely. Thanks to Sustina Elementary, items from the care packages graced every wall of the 90th operations center. In fact, a favorite hung in the dining facility: A mural of hands -- painted red, white and blue, like the flag with a top banner: "We Love You."

The children sent the 90th members snacks, playing cards, card games, magazines, books, personal care items, letters and even books created by the students. Staff, students, and families all donated to the outpouring. Some classes even recorded and sent songs and videos.

"The logistics of it were incredible," said Mary Johnstone, Sustina principal. "It was Gwen Schnabel and her group that really worked to box things up, find out how we should ship it overseas, and gather the money to ship the boxes. It was very exciting, for all of us. We'd felt we had kind of adopted the 90th."

But it was in Doug Heetderks' kindergarten class that the adoption was complete, when Quace Wright raised his hand and told the visiting airmen: "Thank you for protecting our country."

Wild Life Spotlight -- Lynx

Description: A large, short-tailed cat, similar to a bobcat, but distinguished by its long legs, furry feet, long tufts on the tip of each year, and a completely black-tipped tail. Most adults weigh between 18 and 30 pounds, with some males reaching 40 pounds.

At Elmendorf: Up to 15 reside in the northern remote areas of the base, near Six-Mile Lake.

Sightings: They don't like human contact, but unlike wolves, will not flee at the sight of people. They generally avoid developed areas of the base, though it's not uncommon to see lynx, especially in winter.

Campfire tale: "We once responded to a call from a person out at Green Lake," said Mark Sledge, chief military conservation agent for Elmendorf. "He was watching a coyote and a lynx fighting over a rabbit. Although we responded, we watched with binoculars from the chalet and allowed nature to work it out. It

appeared that the lynx caught the rabbit, but the larger coyote was trying to steal it. It didn't last long as the coyote left without the rabbit, but did get some battle scars."

Hi ya, mate: Mating occurs in March and early April, and kittens are born about 63 days later under a natural shelter such as a windfallen spruce, rock ledge or a log jam. Lynx kittens resemble domestic cats at birth and are buff colored with longitudinal streaking on their backs. Most litters include two to four kittens, but sometimes as many as six are born and survive. Kittens remain with their mother until late winter and acquire the hunting skills and knowledge necessary for their survival. During the following breeding season, family units begin to break up.

Travel tips: Lynx normally travel one to five miles per day within home ranges of five to



MASTER SGT. ALAN SZEWCZYK

more than 100 square miles. The largest ranges occur when prey is scarce. Lynx travel and hunt at a walk most of the time and capture their prey with short bursts of speed. They often ambush hares and other small prey while bedded down near small game trails. Lynx are adept at climbing trees but hunt mainly on the ground.

Source: *Alaska Department of Fish and Game; and Mark Sledge, chief military conservation agent*

Sports News

Base trails PACAF fitness standards

By Master Sgt Jon K. Scudder
3rd Wing Public Affairs

By now, the majority of Elmendorf's servicemembers have taken the Air Force's informal muscle-fitness test consisting of push-ups, crunches and cycle ergometry. While many passed, an alarming number have failed, according to local health and wellness officials.

In 2001, 45 percent of Elmendorf personnel could not meet their goal for crunches and 35 percent could not meet their goal for push-ups, according to Maj. Jennifer Papini, 3rd Medical Group Health Flight commander. Eleven percent failed to meet cycle ergometry standards, which was the best pass rate in Pacific Air Forces.

PACAF-wide, 39 percent could not meet the minimum standards for crunches, 36 percent for push-ups and 15 percent for cycle ergometry.

In November, the Air Force Surgeon General delayed mandatory enforcement of the program past the proposed Jan. 1 start date. The goals are now scheduled to become Air Force standards in January 2003. "This temporary delay is only

related to how the Air Force assesses the fitness of its people and in no way reduces the need for people to maintain an appropriate level of fitness," said Col. Deneice Van Hook, chief of the operational prevention division of the Air Force Medical Operations Agency in the office of the Air Force Surgeon General.

Physical fitness is a readiness issue and directly related to the Air Force's ability to meet its global mission, added Van Hook. "All Air Force people must maintain an appropriate fitness level that allows them to perform their duties anywhere and anytime."

Helping Team Elmendorf achieve Air Force fitness standards has been the focus for Papini and her staff at the Elmendorf Health and Wellness Center, located in the former base exchange building.

"Focus on basic aerobic conditioning for a start," said Papini. "An ideal exercise program includes aerobics, strength training and flexibility. In order to pass, like any test, you need to practice."

To help guide people in that direction, the HAWC offers varied classes, including:



STAFF SGT. NATE HIER

Senior Airman Jason Kline, 3rd Communications Squadron, knocks out crunches at the gym.

■ Fitness Basics, a one-hour class which teaches the Frequency, Intensity, Time, Type and Principle, is offered monthly at the HAWC at 1 p.m., Feb. 28, March 28 and April 25.

■ Crunch Class, a weekly one-hour class of intense abdominal workout, which also incorporates upper body conditioning, is offered at 1 p.m., Feb. 27, March 7, 14, 21 and 27.

Sports Shorts

Coaches needed

The youth baseball and softball programs are looking for former players who appreciate the game and would like to share their enthusiasm with young players.

All coaches for the upcoming season will receive training and certification. For more information, or to obtain an application, call 552-5308.

Baseball signups

Registration for the 2002 youth baseball and softball seasons begins March 1. Signups take place at the youth center from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays, and proof of age must be presented upon registration.

Acceptable forms of age verification include birth certificates, TRICARE cards or passports. Also, each player must have a current sports physical on file prior to participation.

The fee is \$45 for the first two children in each family and \$40 for each additional child. For more information, call the center at 552-5308.